

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 7783

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, EEWT, COMECON, UR, CU
SUBJECT: SOVIET LATIN AMERICAN SPECIALIST SAYS CASTRO OUTSHONE
PODGORNY

1. DURING CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY E/C COUNSELOR MAY 28,
SERGO MIKOYAN, EDITOR IN CHIEF OF SOVIET JOURNAL LATINSKAYA
AMERIKA, MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS CONCERNING OUSTER OF PODGORNYY
FROM POLITBURO, ROLE OF CUBA IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND
US/USSR RELATIONS:

A) PODGORNYY LOST HIS SEAT IN THE POLITBURO BECAUSE IT
WAS NECESSARY TO OPEN UP THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE SUPREME
SOVIET (HE WOULD NOT SAY FOR WHOM);
B) PODGORNYY LOOKED RATHER BAD IN COMPARISON WITH THE
PERFORMANCE OF FIDEL CASTRO IN AFRICA IN RECENT WEEKS;
C) CASTRO IS A "BRIGHT" LUMINARY IN BOTH SENSES OF THE
WORD: HE IS HIGHLY INTELLIGENT AND HE MAKES A VERY POSITIVE
IMPACT ON HIS AUDIENCE (MIKOYAN SAYS HE HAS MET CASTRO
PERSONALLY);
D) IN ITS CONCERN OF THE STATIONING OF CUBAN TROOPS
ABROAD, THE US SEEMS TO HAVE ONE POLICY FOR BIG COUNTRIES
AND ANOTHER FOR SMALL (MIKOYAN CLAIMED NOT TO KNOW THAT CUBAN
GARRISONS ARE STATIONED IN A NUMBER OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES);
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E) HE WAS QUITE INTERESTED IN LEARNING IF US WOULD NOW
TRY TO IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH CUBA, AS HE SAID CASTRO
WOULD LIKE TO SEE;

F) GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE US HAS DONE BETTER THAN THE
USSR IN RELATIONSHIP WITH THRID COUNTRIES ALMOST EVERYWHERE
IN RECENT YEARS;

G) IN PARTICULAR, THE SOVIETS MADE A MISTAKE IN "PUTTING ALL OUR EGGS IN ONE BASKET" IN THE MIDDLE EAST; IT WAS A SERIOUS MISTAKE TO HAVE BROKEN RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL; THE USSR THOUGHT IT WOULD WIN THE CONFIDENCE OF THE ARAB STATES THEREBY BUT HAD LEARNED BETTER.

2. ASKED ABOUT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CEMA COUNTRIES AND MEXICO, MIKOYAN STATED THAT NOTHING HAD OCCURRED. MEXICO HAS NOT YET MADE CLEAR WITH IT EXPECTS FROM ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH CEMA.

3. MIKOYAN SAID THAT HIS SON IS PRESENTLY SERVING IN THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON AND ENJOYING VERY MUCH HIS OPPORTUNITIES TO VISIT AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES AND TALK TO YOUNG STUDENTS ABOUT INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. COUNSELOR COMMENTED THAT IT WOULD BE NICE IF OUR EMBASSY COULD DO THE SAME.

4. COMMENT: WE ASSUME MIKOYAN'S WRIT RUNS MOST CLEARLY WHEN REFERRING TO CUBA, WHERE HIS HIGH PERSONAL ASSESSMENT OF CASTRO MAY HAVE COLORED HIS SLIGHTING REFERENCE TO PODGORNYY. FOLLOWING THE LATTER'S ECLIPSE, OTHER HAVE DRAWN THE SAME CONCLUSION IN RECENT DAYS ABOUT HIS ALLEGEDLY FINISHING SECOND IN THE AFRICAN BEAUTY CONTEST. HOWEVER, SOME KNOWLEDGEABLE AFRICAN DIPLOMATS HERE, INCLUDING THE TANZANIAN AND ZAMBIAN DCM'S, DISPUTE THIS LINE OF REASONING. MIKOYAN WAS PRESUMABLY SPEAKING BEYOND THE FRAMEWORK OF HIS OWN RESPONSIBILITY WHEN HE VOLUNTEERED THE NEGATIVE COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF SOVIET SUCCESS VIS-A-VIS THE US IN OTHER AREAS OF THE WORLD. NEVERTHELESS, HIS COMMENTS SUGGEST
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THAT SOME INTELLECTUALS ARE NOT DISINCLINED TO INDULGE IN CRITICISM OF SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY FOR FAILING TO ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES.
MATLOCK

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